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NEST AND EGGS OF SONG-THRUSH
(*Turdus musicus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

WILD BIRDS AT HOME

Sixty photographs from life, by Charles Kirk, of British Birds and their Nests

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THE Publishers beg to draw particular attention to the fact that the illustrations in this little book are all reproductions of genuine photographs from life, taken by Mr. Kirk by means of various devices. Many of them were only obtained with great difficulty, and after patient watching for opportunities, some of them even at considerable personal risk. They are not touched up in any way by the engravers, and may be implicitly relied upon as correct representations of the actual environments of the birds. The nomenclature and order followed are those of Howard Saunders's "List of British Birds." Enquiries as to larger copies of any of these photographs, etc., should be addressed to Mr. Charles Kirk, Naturalist, Glasgow.

BLACKBIRD ON NEST WITH YOUNG (*Turdus merula*) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

BLACKBIRD ON NEST *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

YOUNG OF WILLOW-WREN
(*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

WILLOW-WREN FEEDING YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

WILLOW-WREN FEEDING YOUNG *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

NEST AND EGGS OF WILLOW-WREN

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

SEDGE-WARBLER ENTERING NEST
(*Acrocephalus phragmitis*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG HEDGE-SPARROWS
(*Accentor modularis*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

British Long-tailed Titmouse and Nest (*Acredula rosea*) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

BLUE TITMOUSE AT ENTRANCE OF NEST *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*
(*Parus cæruleus*)

YOUNG MEADOW-PIPITS IN NEST
(*Anthus pratensis*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER ENTERING NEST (*Muscicapa grisola*) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

YOUNG SWALLOWS
(*Hirundo rustica*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

House Sparrow and Nest
(*Passer domesticus*)

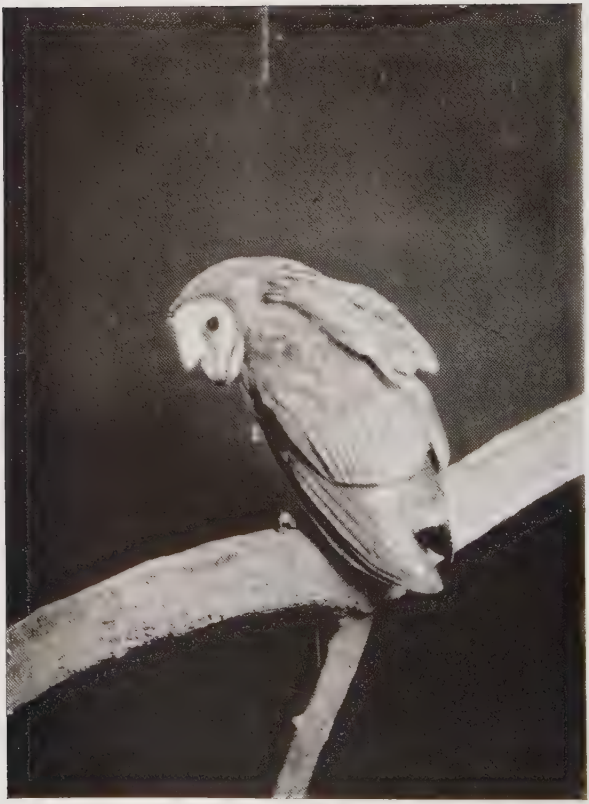
Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG CHAFFINCHES
(*Fringilla cælebs*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YELLOW BUNTING (YELLOW HAMMER) ON NEST
(*Emberiza citrinella*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



WHITE OR BARN-OWL
(Flash-light Photograph)
(*Strix flammea*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF SPARROW-HAWK
(*Accipiter nisus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

EGG AND NEWLY HATCHED YOUNG (FOUR) OF MERLIN IN NEST (*Falco æsalon*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

GANNETS (SOLAN GEESE) ON AILSA CRAIG *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*
(*Sula bassana*)

GANNETS ON NESTS WITH YOUNG *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

GANNETS ON NESTS

Chas. Kirk, Photo

GANNETS ON NESTS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

GANNETS ON NESTS *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

GANNET *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

GANNETS ON THE WING — *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

YOUNG GANNET (THREE WEEKS OLD) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

MUTE SWANS
(*Cygnus olor*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF MALLARD OR WILD DUCK (*Anas boscas*) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

PHEASANT ON NEST
(Phasianus colchicus)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

PARTRIDGE ON NEST
(*Perdix cinerea*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST, EGGS, AND YOUNG OF MOORHEN (WATERHEN) (*Gallinula chloropus*) *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

LAPWING ON NEST
(*Vanellus vulgaris*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

WOODCOCK ON NEST
(*Scolopax rusticula*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

COMMON SANDPIPER ON NEST
(*Totanus hypoleucus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

REDSHANK ON NEST
(*Totanus calidris*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF REDSHANK *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

COMMON CURLEW ON NEST
(*Numenius arquata*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON CURLEW
(See Last Picture)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

BLACK-HEADED GULLS
(*Larus ridibundus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

BLACK-HEADED GULLS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG HERRING-GULLS IN NEST
(*Larus argentatus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS
(*Larus fuscus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

EGG AND NEWLY HATCHED YOUNG OF LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

KITTIWAKE GULLS ON AILSA CRAIG
(*Rissa tridactyla*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

KITTIWAKE GULLS *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

KITTIWAKE GULLS ON NESTS WITH YOUNG *Chas Kirk, Photo.*

KITTIWAKE GULLS *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

RAZORBILLS ON AILSA CRAIG
(*Alca torda*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

RAZORBILLS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG RAZORBILLS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

EGGS OF RAZORBILL IN SITU

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

GUILLEMOTS ON AILSA CRAIG
(*Uria troile*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

GUILLEMOTS *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

GUILLEMOTS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

GUILLEMOTS OFF AILSA CRAIG *Chas. Kirk, Photo.*

YOUNG GUILLEMOTS BATHING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

PUFFINS ON AILSA CRAIG
(*Fratercula arctica*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

PUFFINS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

Some Notes on the Birds

OF WHICH

PHOTOGRAPHS APPEAR IN THE FOREGOING PAGES . .

BY

GEORGE GIRDWOOD.

Blackbird—This sable-coated songster with its yellow bill is familiar to everyone. The species is resident with us all year, is widely distributed, and is to be observed commonly in all wooded neighbourhoods. Though guilty of taking a toll from the ripened fruit of the currant bushes, he amply repays this by services to the gardener, and by the delight of his mellow, flute-like song heard from early spring late into summer. The nest is placed in a hedge or shrub, about five feet from the ground, and contains four or five eggs of a pale green ground-colour, thickly covered with brown spots.

Bunting, Yellow—This, the most common of the British buntings, is resident, widely distributed, and, in most corn-growing districts, abundant. Its colouring is bright, the back and breast yellowish-green, streaked with black, as are also the feathers of the wing and tail. In the male bird the tail coverts are bright chestnut colour, the crown brilliant yellow, and the rest of the head yellowish-green. In this bird, as in the other buntings, the mandible is furnished on the inner surface with a horny ridge by means of which the bird separates the outer husk from the grain or seed on which it largely feeds. The Yellow Bunting usually places its nest upon the ground, often upon a bank, but sometimes in furze or low-growing bush. The eggs, three to six in number, are of stone colour suffused with faint purple, and scrawled and scribbled with lines and dots of dark purplish brown. The song of the Yellow Bunting, while apt in the districts where the bird is abundant to become monotonous, is characteristic and unmistakable, consisting of a series of twitterings leading to a long drawn out note on which it dwells. It song has been likened to the words "a little bit of bread and butter p-l-e-a-s-e."

Chaffinch—This finch is one of the most brilliantly coloured of our British birds, and the male in spring, when the varied colours of his plumage are at their brightest, with his blue cap, and bright contrast of black, white, and saffron on wings and breast, presents a handsome appearance, as he pours out his short but melodious song, or utters his characteristic cry of "pink-pink." The Chaffinch is a resident with us throughout the year, is widely distributed, and in many districts is abundant. The habit

of this species, from which it derives its scientific name of "Bachelor-bird," is that shown in the winter months, when the males and females separate, gathering at that season in flocks, each flock composed solely of the one sex. The Chaffinch is a seed-eater, but during the breeding season becomes largely insectivorous, feeding its young on caterpillars, flies, and grubs. The nest of the Chaffinch is exquisitely constructed of moss and lichen, and closely lined with hair and feathers, and it is not at all uncommon to find worked into the outside small bits of newspaper, oftentimes the relic of a paper chase. The nest, often built in the lichen-covered fork of an apple tree, assimilates so closely to its surroundings, as often to be difficult of discovery. The eggs are usually four in number, greenish in ground-colour, and streaked and marked with brown and black.

Curlew, Common—The Curlew, known in Scotland as the "Whaup," belongs to the wading family, and during the winter may be frequently seen on the sea-shore and river-bank. In spring it seeks the uplands to nest, and there on hillside or open moor, it builds its nest upon the ground, without cover, trusting solely to the unfrequented nature of the ground, and the protective colour of its eggs to escape observation. The eggs, four in number and large for the size of the bird, are olive-green in ground-colour, spotted with brown. The Curlew's cry, from which its name is derived, is an eerie and somewhat melancholy whistling scream, especially when heard at night on the lonely moor, and no doubt has given rise to the belief, which prevails among many country folks, that the bird is uncanny. In our native isles the bird is strong, and one during stranger who once fired at this bird was long pointed at, almost with terror, as the "man that ate the whaup." The Curlew is grey in colour, streaked with dark. Like the rest of the wading family it is possessed of long legs and bill, the latter slightly curved. The bill, indeed, is quite altogether out of proportion to the size of the bird, and it is wonderful to note the dexterous way in which it will snatch even a tiny fly from off a blade of grass, with this unwieldy instrument, which is perhaps of more service to it in probing the muddy bank on river-side or shore.

Spotted Flycatcher—This "most familiar bird," so lovingly written of by Gilbert White, is widely distributed and not uncommon. It is a summer migrant, and may be identified by its persistent habit of perching on the top of some favourite post, from which it ever and again flits out to hawk at a passing insect, returning to the post only to repeat its flight after a short interval. Save for this habit it is so quiet-mannered as to attract but little notice: its lack of song and inconspicuous colouring allowing it to pass unnoticed in many cases. The nest is placed in a variety of situations, the most favourite being possibly a recess in a tree trunk, where a branch has rotted out, or a hole made where a branch springs from the main stem, though a clump of ivy growing out from a wall or a hole in the wall itself are also often selected. The eggs, four or five in number, are usually of a pale green ground-colour, prettily blotched with a light brown, though occasionally a clutch may be observed where the ground-colour is of blotched green, with distinct spots of red-brown.

Gannet—The Gannet or Solan Goose presents on flight a magnificent appearance, as with straightly outstretched wings, it sweeps round its haunts high above the sea. Again, its plunge is impressive, as it hurls itself from a height of over a hundred feet into the sea, which it strikes with great violence, disappearing in a cloud of spray; this is its method of catching the

herring on which it feeds, and as the fisherman starts off on a similar pursuit, he eagerly looks for direction to where these natural fishers are at work. The Gannet is provided with a wonderful apparatus in the shape of a series of small sacks lying immediately beneath the skin of the breast. These sacks it can at will inflate, thus forming a pneumatic cushion to enable it to resist the impact caused by meeting the water after its headlong descent from on high, and also rendering its return to the surface more easy on account of this added buoyancy. The Gannet breeds in colonies, notably on Ailsa Craig, St. Kilda, and the Bass Rock. It builds a somewhat large nest of seaweed and grasses, and in this lays a single egg of a very pale blue colour, but this ground-colour is quite obscured by a thick deposit of a chalky nature.

Guillemot—The Guillemot is probably the most common of the diving birds which visit our coasts each spring to breed. It is this bird which, known as "The Ducker," is to be seen from March to August at the mouths of our larger estuaries, and along such parts of our coast-line as afford the rocky cliffs on which it rears its young. It permits a comparatively near approach of boat or steamer, but at the last moment shows a clean pair of heels; disappearing below the surface, to reappear after what seems to the observer a very long time, in a possibly quite unexpected direction. The Guillemot lays her egg on a rocky shelf high above the water, and without anything in the shape of nest, and in this connection is seen one of the wonderful provisions of nature for the preservation of a species; the egg, a single one, very large for the size of the bird, is possessed of a thick shell, and while broad at the one end is much elongated, and runs to quite a sharp point. This long pointed shape causes the egg when disturbed, as by the hurried departure of the sitting bird, to roll round in a circle, and it thus remains upon its ledge, which is often but a narrow one. Were the egg round like that, say, of the owls, which nest in holes, the species would in a comparatively short number of years become extinct, unless, of course, the bird changed its habits with regard to the site of its nesting place. The eggs of the Guillemot vary in colour, being often of a dark blue, others of a lighter blue, greeny blue, or creamy white, while a rare type is of a dark claret colour, all being blotched with black markings.

Gull, Black-headed—This bird should really be called the Brown-headed Gull, the feathers of its head being dark brown, though in contrast to the white of the rest of its plumage appearing black; or better still, the Common Gull, as it is this bird which is most commonly to be seen of the Gull tribe. But this last name has been given by ornithologists to "Larus Canus," a comparatively rare bird which is to be observed only on our remoter coasts, and out-lying isles, and is not very plentiful even there. The Black-headed Gull is to be seen on our tidal rivers, feeding at such points as where the sewage of our towns enters, and in winter it haunts the neighbourhood of our riverside towns, where it has become very tame of late years, frequenting at that season even such busy places as the Thames Embankment, where it is fed by the benevolent. In spring this bird resorts to marshy moors and lochs where it breeds, usually in colonies, making a nest of rushes and grasses sufficiently high to raise its eggs clear of the water. The eggs, two, three, or rarely four in number, are variable in colour: a common type is darkish green in ground-colour, spotted and blotched with black and brown. This bird is a good friend to man, and in spring and autumn may be seen following the plough, picking up grubs and worms as they are upturned, and by the contrast of the silver-white of its plumage against the dark earth ever providing a pleasing picture.

Gull, Herring—This large and handsome bird is in habits and appearance very much the same as the Lesser Black-backed Gull, and frequents similar localities; in fact, these two birds often occupy what might be called a joint-colony; at certain parts the Herring-Gull being in greater numbers, while in other districts the Lesser Black-backed out-numbers it. The Herring-Gull is slightly larger than the Lesser Black-backed, and the black of back and wings is in this bird replaced by a delicate shade of pale grey, the lighter colouration tending to make the bird appear still larger, relatively, than its congener. This species is also a frequenter of our coasts, tidal rivers, and estuaries, where ofttimes gliding on scarcely moving wing, it will outpace and even circle round a fast-going steamer, patiently following mile after mile to discern with surprising keenness any eatable fragments thrown overboard, which it will lag behind to pick up; thereafter with a few strokes of its powerful pinions overtaking the vessel in a few moments. The nesting haunts of this bird are similar to those of the Lesser Black-backed, as are also the nest and eggs.

Gull, Kittiwake—This charming sea bird derives its name from the resemblance of its cry to the syllables "Kit-i-wake" It is a summer visitor in large numbers to our coasts and islands, where it nests usually in conjunction with Guillemots and Razorbills, but this bird builds on the ledges of the cliff-face a nest of seaweed and grasses, in which it lays its two or three eggs, stone colour, spotted and blotched with grey and brown. In colour this bird is a delicate grey on the back with the breast and under parts pure white, the eye is large, full, and dark, and the bill greenish-lemon. On its first arrival on its nesting ground, before its plumage is soiled by contact with the nest or rocks, it is exquisitely dainty in its purity of colour. A visit to the breeding haunt of a colony of sea fowl, is to many memorable, and dominant above many points of recollection may be that of lying on the short wind-swept turf, blue sky above, blue sea below, while the gentle cry of "Kit-i-wake, Ki-hi-ti-wake," sounds ceaselessly as the gleaming white birds circle round their nests. The young of the Kittiwake resemble their parents in general colour, but are marked with black amid the grey of the back and wings. In August they begin their southward flight, and by the end of September, the thronging, busy colony is tenantless and deserted, to be so till spring again comes round.

Gull, Lesser Black-backed—This bird, a resident in Britain throughout the year, is numerous and widely distributed along our coast-lines. It is a large and handsome bird, white in colour but with, as the name denotes, back and wings of blue-black colour, and with a large and powerful beak. The young do not become mature until their fourth year, and are until then of a dull white colour, speckled with grey. The Lesser Black-backed Gull has few, if any, good qualities, nay, is indeed both thief and murderer. They nest most usually in the vicinity of other sea fowl, and are ruthless robbers of the eggs and young of such species as Guillemots and Kittiwakes, selecting a moment when the parent bird is absent, to make a dash and seize their prey. Their nest is a slight structure of dry grasses, placed upon the green slopes of the cliffs along our coast-line and islands, but occasionally they will select an island on some fresh-water lake, or even the heather of the open moorland. The eggs are three in number, somewhat variable in shade, but usually of a greenish stone ground-colour, spotted and blotched with grey and black, and are not to be distinguished from those of the Herring-Gull, save by identification of the bird as she rises from the nest.

Hedge-Sparrow—The name "sparrow" is here rather a misnomer, for between the daintiness, shapeliness and colouration of this bird and those points of a house-sparrow, very great differences indeed exist. Its other name, Hedge Accentor, describes this bird more fitly. It is a resident in Britain, is widely distributed and common nearly everywhere, though, its colouring being unobtrusive and its habits retiring, it may not be so much observed as other of its more brightly coloured congeners; indeed it may be that its nest, often built before the hedgerows are in leaf, with its four or five exquisite blue eggs, is nearly as familiar to many as the bird itself. Its song is very pleasing, a trifle high in pitch perhaps, but heard early in spring it is clear and powerful to a degree which is surprising if the small size of the songster be considered. In England it is in many parts known as the "Shuffle Wing," this name being descriptive of its habit of popping out and in the hedge-rows, with its wings drooped and shaking. The colour of the bird at the first glance seems to be dull brown, but a more careful inspection reveals a dull blue hue pervading breast and shoulder. It may be that this bears some relation to the most exquisite colour of its eggs.

Lapwing—The Lapwing, Peewit, or Green Plover, is the bird whose eggs under the name of Plover's eggs, are considered so great a delicacy and fetch so high a price, when first procurable, towards the end of March. This species is resident in the British Isles throughout the year, and is abundant and widely distributed. It derives its second name from its call, and at nesting-time the intrusion of man, dog, or hooded crow upon its haunts, sends the birds up into the air, where they twist and curvet in all directions, shooting upwards, turning around, tumbling through the air and giving utterance to this cry in a perfect frenzy of indignation. In Scotland in Covenanting times, when men were driven for refuge to the hillsides and bleak moors, this bird earned for itself the name of "Devil's fowl," owing to its afore-mentioned habit, which in many cases gave a clue to the pursuing dragoons of where a refugee was moving in his endeavour to escape. The Lapwing is handsome in plumage, the lower parts are white, the tail coverts chestnut, the head, back, and wings are of dark green, nearly black, and shining with a lustrous iridescence. The head is surmounted with elongated feathers forming a crest from which the bird has attained its further name of Crested Lapwing. The nest consists of a slight depression in the ground, lined with a few straws, and contains four eggs, pear-shaped, buff in ground-colour, and blotched with black markings.

Mallard or Wild Duck—The Wild Duck is the bird from which our domestic species of duck have been produced; it is a resident in the British Isles, gathering in the winter months in large flocks on our estuaries and coasts, when inland waters are frostbound. In flight the Wild Duck, when once upon the wing, is strong and fast, the wing moving very rapidly. The flock invariably progress in a "V" shape, thus overcoming more easily the resistance to the atmosphere, while the single bird at the point of the "V," on whom the pressure falls, is replaced at intervals by another of the company. The nesting places of the Mallard are varied; one frequently selected is in the heather of the moorland, distant from water, but their nests are also found in rushes by the lake side, or even in the disused nest of some other bird many feet from the ground in a tree. The eggs, ten or twelve in number, are buff-coloured and are cosily imbedded in a thick lining of down, which the mother bird pulls from her breast. The young leave the nest immediately after hatching, and are led by their mother to the nearest water, where they are

initiated in the art of swimming and diving. At this time the parent bird shows the greatest solicitude for the safety of her brood, and resorts to strange tactics to lead an intruder from where her ducklings are concealed, imitating the actions of a wounded bird, and often in extremity feigning death, till, her ruse being successful, and the intruder drawn to a distance, she throws off pretence, and taking wing rapidly disappears.

Merlin—This little falcon is the smallest of our British birds of prey. Though small in size it is powerful and daring, attacking fearlessly and ofttimes successfully birds considerably larger than itself. It is a bird of the moorland, where it may be seen perched upon some stone standing above the heather; hence its other name of "Stone Falcon." It is considered by the gamekeeper an enemy, and no doubt the Merlin takes, like the bold pirate that he is, a tribute from the humbler folk inhabiting his domain. The Merlin makes its nest upon the ground amid the heather and there lays its four or five eggs, white in ground-colour, but this barely visible through the suffusion of reddish brown, with which the eggs are thickly covered. The plumage of the Merlin is blue-black above, the breast dull white with black markings, and the bird with his hooked bill and proud carriage looks what he is, a bold and dashing fellow.

Moor-hen—The Moor-hen or Waterhen, is resident with us throughout the year, is abundant and widely distributed, frequenting ponds, lakes, and streams; being particularly fond of a back-water on the last. It is seldom to be found far from water, where, being extremely tame, it may be easily observed either walking along the shore or swimming out and in amid the reeds and water herbage, pursuing the insects on which it mostly feeds. The nest is a structure of dead leaves, flags, or rushes, and is frequently placed upon the low out-reaching bough of a willow tree, where it meets the surface of the water, though occasionally a nest may be found built at a height of several feet. The eggs, from eight to ten in number, are of dull creamy colour with spots of dark brown. The young are thickly covered with black down, and very speedily betake themselves to the water, where at an early age many meet an untimely end within the ravenous maw of the pike. In colour the Moor-hen is of a greenish-black, the bill greenish-yellow, and it is to be distinguished from its congener the Coot, which frequents very similar localities, by the absence of the white frontal patch on the head, which is the outstanding feature of the latter bird.

Partridge—This game bird is abundantly and widely distributed, but more common in the low lying and agricultural parts of our country than in the bare and less cultivated highlands. It is an especial lover of the corn-growing districts, making its nest in the hedge rows, where it lays up to sixteen, or even more, eggs of a buff colour, unspotted. The Partridge is a careful mother, as indeed she must be with so large a family to look after. Like other of our game birds, the Partridge is a swift runner, and if cover of any kind is near, is difficult to flush. These birds roost upon the ground, the covey gathering together in a small circle, heads outward, and numbers fall victims through this habit to the artifices of the poaching fraternity. In colour the Partridge is of a brownish-grey, ornamented in the breeding season by a chestnut-coloured marking of horse-shoe shape upon the breast.

Pheasant—This game bird was introduced several centuries ago from Persia. It has become to a degree naturalized, but there are, however, many thousands reared annually by hand to stock the game preserves for purposes of sport. The Pheasant is a handsome bird, rich in colouration, with a long and graceful tail, and to its protection more than to any other cause is due the extinction of several species of our birds of prey, and of great diminution in the numbers of the others. The young of the Pheasant are somewhat defenceless, and afford an irresistible attraction to the Sparrow-Hawk. From the point of view of the gamekeeper and of certain sportsmen big bags are the one and only aim, but to the general lover of nature it is questionable whether the big battues which we see recorded as each season comes round, are an adequate return for the extinction of certain species of our raptorial birds, and the diminished numbers of many other grand birds, such as say the Peregrine Falcon. The nest of the Pheasant is a rude affair, built upon the ground in a clump of grass or bracken, and contains from eight to ten eggs, of a buff colour, unspotted. Large numbers of pheasants are annually reared from eggs placed beneath domestic fowls and in incubators, and these chicks are hand-fed by the keeper and his assistants up to the shooting season. The change from this daily act of kindness to the sudden and widely extended slaughter which takes place when the shooting season comes round must be somewhat incomprehensible to the fowl.

Pipit, Meadow.—The Meadow-Pipit, or Tit-Lark is common and widely distributed over the whole of the British Isles. In appearance it resembles the Skylark, but is smaller in size and darker in colour. It is pre eminently the small bird of the moorland, where it nests, carefully concealing its eggs within the shelter of a tussock of grass. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a dull bluish-white in ground-colour, but are so thickly besprinkled with spots and freckles of greyish-brown as to leave the ground-colour barely visible. This is the bird in whose nest the cuckoo frequently places its egg; and it is indeed an incongruous sight, that of the two Tit-Larks feeding the young monster palmed off upon them, which, even before fully grown, is in bulk much larger than both its foster parents together. This species is much preyed on by the Merlin, to whose dash, in the absence of cover on the moor, it falls a somewhat easy victim. While resident with us throughout the year, it descends during the winter months from the high moorland to lower-lying and less inhospitable parts.

Owl, White or Barn.—This species is unfortunately becoming much more uncommon than was the case even ten years ago. No bird is a greater friend to man than the Owl, waging as it does, a constant warfare against the mouse and rat, on which two rodents it chiefly feeds. It, however, has had the sad fate of arousing the somewhat ready suspicion of the game-keeper, who in many cases ruthlessly destroys all owls which come before him. The game-keeper's idea is, that the owl is an enemy to his young pheasants, and it may be that occasionally a member of the owl family may "go wrong," and err in this respect, but when one learns of an owl being shot because it was "seen fluttering near the pheasant coops," and finds that a closer inspection reveals the presence of both rats and mice, which frequent such spots to feed upon the pheasants' food, the conjecture that a missing young pheasant may have been accounted for by a rat, and that the presence of the owl is in direct relation to the presence of the rodents, surely may reasonably present itself, while the ejected pellets of indigestible matter around the owl's nest, most usually consist of the fur and bones of rats and mice; only but seldom

are feathers to be found therein. The Barn-Owl at one time was a frequent occupant of the church spire in country districts, but is now in most instances learning that proximity to man is dangerous, and is found seldom but in remoter woods and cliffs. The Barn Owl is, as its alternative name denotes, white in colour, the head and back suffused with cinnamon and grey, with small black spots, breast and under parts white. This species breeds in holes, usually in a tree, where it brings up its young, six in number, laying its eggs in pairs at intervals, and thus there may be found in the same nest a pair of fully-feathered young, a pair just emerging from the egg, and a pair of fresh eggs. These last are white without markings, and round in shape.

Puffin—This bird presents in the breeding season when its beak is much enlarged, quite a humorous appearance. It is one of the marine diving birds with habits similar to those of the Guillemot and Razorbill, and breeds in similar localities. The Puffin, however, lays its solitary egg at the end of a short burrow in the peat which usually covers the tops of the small islands round our coast-line or the cliff-heads of the coast itself. The egg, when newly laid, is white with faint under-shell markings of pale brown, but speedily through contact with the peat, becomes stained and discoloured. The colour of the bird is black above, and white underneath, the sides of the head a pale lavender, and the feet a brilliant red. The salient point of the bird is its bill, very large for the size of the bird, and in shape resembling that of the parrot. It is brilliantly coloured with red, blue, and yellow. The Puffin is in its habits pelagic, save at the breeding season, when it resorts in countless myriads to the remoter parts of our isles to breed. The Puffin feeds its young on the fry of certain fishes, and is particularly fond of the sand eel. The parent bird may be seen returning to the nest with numbers of this latter protruding from either side of the bill, each little fish neatly held just behind the head. The movements of sand eels are not wanting in alacrity, and it is interesting to conjecture how the bird retains its hold of, say, the first nine caught, while capturing the tenth.

Razorbill—This bird derives its name from the likeness in shape of its bill to that of a razor, and this resemblance is greater than are many characteristics from which other birds have derived their names. In general habits and appearance the Razorbill closely resembles the Guillemot, but a visitor to its rocky haunts, where both species are invariably found associated, will soon perceive the two distinguishing features by which the Razorbill may be identified from the Guillemot, viz: its blunt bill instead of the awl-shaped weapon of the Guillemot, and by the former's dense black colour as against the sooty brown of the latter. The Razorbill lays its solitary egg, reddish-brown or white in ground-colour, usually thickly spotted and speckled with black and brown, in a somewhat similar position to that affected by the Guillemot, but seeks a situation of greater safety, selecting a cranny or nook beneath some boulder, instead of the open, naked shelf on which the Guillemot deposits her egg. It is a moot point as to how this bird brings her young from the nesting-place, possibly 200 or 300 feet above the sea, down to the water. Some observers insist that they have seen the parent bird bearing the young one down perched on its back, but this seems improbable: it is more likely that instinct will teach the nestling the confidence necessary for it to trust to its outspread wings, and by that means to convey itself down to that element thereafter to be so largely its home; for this bird spends all the rest of the year from nesting season to nesting season at sea.

Redshank—This bird is a resident in Britain, and in localities suited to its habits is not uncommon. In the winter months it is a frequenter of the river-banks and the muddy shores of our estuaries and coasts, while in spring it resorts to moor and low-lying, swampy land, where on the ground, neatly concealed in a tussock of grass or rushes, its four eggs, stone-colour in ground, spotted and blotched with darker brown and black, are carefully concealed. Its name is derived from its long legs, red in colour. This bird is one of the most wary of the wading family. The approach of any suspected stranger sending it off in full flight to the accompaniment of a long-drawn, whistling cry. The species may be identified by this call, and by the flashing white of its plumage as seen from the rear during flight, and consisting of the pure white undertail coverts and outer margin of the feathers of the wing.

Sandpiper, Common—The Common Sandpiper or Summer Snipe is a migrant arriving in large numbers on our shores in April, whence it distributes itself widely through the land, and is common in many situations suited to its habits. The Sandpiper is grey in colour, with white underparts, the bill fairly long, and as the bird trips daintily along the margin of the water or flits hurriedly past, uttering its shrill whistling cry, it is a not uncommon object by river or lake-side. Its nest, which is oft-times hard to find, is built upon the ground, in the vicinity of the water, and is usually carefully concealed among the herbage, always plentiful in such situations. The eggs are four in number, large for the size of the bird, are pear shaped, stone-colour, glossy in surface and spotted and blotched with brown and black. This species is largely insectivorous in habit, and does much towards ridding our river-sides of the winged pests with which in the summer months they are infested.

Sparrow, House—This bird is so well known to everyone both in town and country, that it is hardly necessary to say much about it. It is seldom seen at any distance from the home of man, but alike at the solitary farmhouse and amidst the bustle of the great city, this saucy little bird is found. In rural life the sparrow gets a bad name, and it is unquestionable that at the time of the ripening of the grain, the large flocks of sparrows which at that time visit the fields, must take a heavy toll of the ripe corn, and it is in this connection that we see it figured amid the hieroglyphs upon the ancient tombs of Egypt as "Sa-me-di," signifying "the bird of scarcity and death." However it may have acted as a plague in Egypt, it certainly can do no harm by its presence in our large towns, and its saucy appearance and chirrup would be missed by many whose fortune it is but seldom to wander in the haunts of its more favoured congeners. The sparrow's nest is an untidy structure, its presence often revealed by dangling straws or feathers, and in this receptacle are laid its five, six, or seven eggs, white in ground-colour and spotted with greyish-black.

Sparrow-Hawk—This bold raptorial bird is resident with us during the year, and despite the most persistent persecution of the species by the game-keeper over the length and breadth of the land, still manages to maintain itself in considerable numbers. The female is, as throughout the raptorial family, considerably larger than the male, and it is unfortunately unquestionable that she destroys, especially at the breeding season, numbers of the young of the game birds near whose haunts she invariably nests. The site selected by the Sparrow-Hawk for nesting purposes, is frequently a corner of a wood or on the edge of a glade inside a wood, and so suitable a position does this site appear to be that pair after pair of Sparrow-

Hawks may be shot from the nest only to be replaced each succeeding year by another couple. The male is blue black above, the breast white suffused with brown, barred with a darker shade of brown, while his mate is rather lighter in colour, the breast white barred with ashy-grey. The legs of both are yellow, with toes greatly developed, giving great grasping power, and ending in needle-pointed talons. The eggs, five or six in number, are of bluish-white ground-colour, richly blotched and marked with reddish-brown.

Swallow—This summer migrant is well known to all, though frequently one hears the Swift, House-Martin, and Sand-Martin indiscriminately spoken of as Swallows. The Swallow or "Chimney Swallow" may be distinguished from the afore-mentioned birds by its brilliant blue-black colour, by the chestnut colour of its throat, and by the much elongated feather on either side of the tail. The migratory instinct of the swallow has been much discussed, but possibly it is not so wonderful that a bird with such power of wing as is possessed by this species should come to us yearly from even so far as South Africa, as it is that the tiny Gold-Crest, not one-fourth its size and comparatively feeble on the wing, crosses the North Sea in its migration from Norway to our coasts. It is possibly the habit of the Swallow in attaching itself to the proximity of man, to nest in barns and other outhouses, which has made it attract the greater interest. The Swallows, preparatory to their departure for their winter stay in climes warmer than ours, collect in enormous numbers, usually selecting at this period for rendezvous, such places as reed and osier beds skirting the margin of river, lake, or pond, and it must have been their last appearance in our isles in this proximity, which caused the old belief that they retired to hibernate beneath the water into the mud, at the bottom of lake or pond. No more interesting reading is found in Gilbert White's pages than that in which he discusses the likelihood of such a habit, and it is pleasing to see his logic ultimately emerge triumphant in refutation of such a possibility. The nest of the "Chimney Swallow" is but a slight structure, placed on the flat upper side of joist or beam in stable or barn. The eggs, five or six in number, are pure white, speckled with dots of brown.

Swan, Mute—This bird is perhaps hardly entitled to appear among "wild birds at home," rather is it a tame bird abroad, as it exists in our country only in a state of partial domestication, having been introduced to the British Isles some centuries ago from Cyprus. The shapeliness and grace of this bird are proverbial, and it forms a pleasing addition to the beauties of many a river and lake through the land. In early days the Swan was the property of the Crown, and was rigorously protected. Occasionally this bird becomes imbued in spring with a restless spirit, when in some cases a pair will leave their customary haunts and taking wing hie themselves to some remoter water-side, there to rear their young, but more commonly they build their large nest in the immediate vicinity of their home, preferably upon an island if such is obtainable. The eggs are usually five in number, of pale green colour. The young are dark grey in colour and are known as "Cygnets." While nesting the Swan will exhibit much courage, and it is at times dangerous to approach the nest, a blow from her powerful wing being no trifling matter.

Thrush, Song.—The Song-Thrush or Mavis is resident with us throughout the year, is abundant and widely distributed. Being double and even treble-brooded, this species when, free for a few years from the severity of an exceptionally hard winter, rapidly

increases in numbers, but it is a somewhat delicate bird, and when the iron hand of the "Frost King" binds the land for week after week in his impenetrable grasp, the Song Thrush, unable to procure its necessary food, dies in thousands. The bird is olive-brown above, with breast of cream-colour daintily spotted with black. The nest, built early in the year, is neatly plastered round inside with mud, thus forming for the eggs a warm protection from the biting blasts of early spring. It is placed usually from four to five feet above the ground, within the sheltering cover of some evergreen bush, though occasionally placed upon the ground. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a bright clear blue with tiny spots of black. The Thrush is celebrated in song, and worthily so, as one of the most exquisite of our bird musicians, its liquid note being in beauty equal to that of any of our songsters save possibly the nightingale alone.

Titmouse, Blue—This little bird is widely distributed and common everywhere. In habit, it appears to be possessed of an eternal restlessness, being ever on the move. In the winter months when branch and twig are bare, its movements may be easily observed. At that time of the year, it moves about in little companies, composed of numbers of its own species along with Redpolls, Gold-Crests, and sometimes Greater Tits, busily searching the boughs of the trees, in very odd attitudes (as often upside down as not), for insects and their eggs concealed in the crevices of the bark. It also becomes very bold under the pressure of hunger, and often is to be seen in gardens, where much amusement may be derived from its antics, if a bone be suspended, within eye-shot of the window. It will fearlessly alight thereon and peck vigorously, while any scrap of meat or gristle remains. The Blue Tit nests in a hole, preferably in a tree, but oftimes in a wall, where it frequently enters by a surprisingly small aperture. It is this bird which is the heroine of so many newspaper paragraphs, describing the nesting of a bird in a letter-box. Its eggs seven to nine in number, are white, speckled with dots of light reddish-brown.

Titmouse, Long-tailed—This feathered mite is a resident with us, widely distributed, and in certain districts fairly common. As will be seen in the illustration it is possessed of a tail longer than its body, which is of a dull whitish-brown colour, slightly suffused with pale rose. It is indeed a charming sight, to see the little family, consisting of the two parent birds, with their six, eight, nine, or even ten young, flitting along from tree to tree as is their habit in the autumn months. Their tiny size combined with their length of tail renders them quite distinct from any of our other birds. The Long-tailed Tit builds what is unquestionably the most beautiful of British nests, an elongated structure of moss thickly covered with lichen, and felted together with cobwebs, with a small aperture beneath the upper end, and cosily lined with feathers. One patient observer took the trouble to count the number of feathers contained in one nest, to find the surprising number of over 2000. The eggs, usually ten or eleven in number, are extremely small, pure white, and spotted with tiny dots of light brown. With the exception of the Golden-Crested Wren, the egg of the Long-tailed Tit is the smallest laid by any of our British birds. The instinct is surely a marvellous one, which enables these feathered mites to feed without favour and in due turn the ten hungry tots contained in their cradle.

Warbler, Sedge.—This tiny summer visitor is about the size of a sparrow and is fairly common in the marshes, or loch and riverside localities which it loves to frequent. It is of a lightish-brown colour, and may be identified by the distinct yellow streak above the eye,

which is visible in the illustration. The Sedge-Warbler is a vociferous songster, more voluble than melodious, though its song heard by some river-bank as the shades of evening are falling is in harmony with the hour, and not without a certain beauty, and it is in the gloaming that this bird loves to sing. One of its peculiarities in this respect is, that it may be encouraged in its song by a stone thrown into the bush where it is perched. In feeding, this bird is very largely insectivorous, and even one pair must during the rearing of their young, destroy a vast number of these tiny winged tormentors, of whose power to cause annoyance most anglers must have rueful memories. The nest of the Sedge-Warbler is placed in a thick bush or clump of herbage near the water, and its eggs, five or six in number, are of a brownish-cream colour, invariably marked at the larger end by tiny and hair-like lines of black.

Woodcock—The Woodcock belongs to the family of wading birds. Some woodcocks are resident with us and breed, but larger numbers visit these isles as winter migrants, arriving in autumn and departing again in spring. Most of these birds would appear to reach our shores from Norway and such higher latitudes, from whence no doubt they are driven by the inclemency of the approaching winter to our less inhospitable shores, where their food-supply is more easily procurable. In general colour the Woodcock is of a rich chestnut-brown, spotted and streaked with black. The bill is long in proportion to the size of the bird, and is used for probing the mud in which it seeks its food. The eye is large and dark, and is situated high and far back in the head, imparting a somewhat peculiar look to the bird. This species is much valued by the sportsman and "gourmand." The Woodcock feeds mostly at night, when it resorts to lake and riverside; during the day it lies up under cover, and is at that time, like other night wanderers, disinclined to move, and may be somewhat easily approached. It is not common as a nesting species, but still there are few counties throughout the British Isles where nests have not been found. The eggs, four in number, laid in a slight depression on the ground, are creamy-stone in ground-colour, blotched and flecked with grey and brown.

Willow-Wren—The Willow-Wren or Willow-Warbler is one of the most common of our summer migrants, though owing to its small size, and protective colouring, it is not easily seen, and is therefore not so well known as many others, such as the swallow. But there can be hardly a square mile of open country, save perhaps the higher and bare moorland, that has not resident upon it for the summer months, at least one pair of these useful, tiny and delicate songsters One of nature's wonders is the instinct which brings this tiny feathered mite only five inches long, from the continent of Africa over land and ocean to visit our isles to rear its young. The Willow-Warbler is a very beautiful little bird, but a sharp eye is needed to catch sight of its greenish plumage, with the tiny yellow streak above the eye, either as it pours out its melodious song from its leafy haunts, or restlessly from branch to branch pursues the insects on which it feeds. The nest, which is of a domed shape, is placed upon the ground, carefully concealed in grass, ferns or herbage of some kind, and contains six or seven tiny white eggs speckled with lightish-brown.

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